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SOURCE: CBLEXCLS.006830

DRAFTED BY: WHA/PDA:LSHAMILTON -- 01/28/2005 647-4726

APPROVED BY: WHA/PDA:GRGALLEGOS

PA: RBOUCHER(SUBS)

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC, KPAO

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
DATE/CASE ID: 24 OCT 2005 200304736

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SUBJECT: WHA GUIDANCE, JANUARY 27, 2005

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- End Summary.

1. PRESS STATEMENT, JANUARY 27, 2005:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF THE SPOKESMAN
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 27, 2005
2005/90

STATEMENT BY RICHARD BOUCHER, SPOKESMAN

-- CANDIDACY OF FRANCISCO FLORES FOR SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES --

THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS THE CANDIDACY OF FRANCISCO FLORES,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF EL SALVADOR FOR SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES. PRESIDENT FLORES IS A
DYNAMIC FORMER HEAD OF STATE WHO HAS THE POLITICAL ACUMEN,
REGIONAL STATURE, ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED
TO LEAD THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE'S MOST IMPORTANT MULTILATERAL
ORGANIZATION. A COMMITTED DEMOCRAT AND MULTILATERALIST,
PRESIDENT FLORES EMBODIES THE VALUES THAT UNDERPIN THE WORK
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES.

2. WHA PRESS GUIDANCE, JANUARY 27, 2005:

-- VENEZUELA: SUMATE CASE UPDATE --

Q: ANY COMMENTS ON TODAY'S WASHINGTON TIMES STORY ABOUT THE
CHARGES OF "TREASON" BY THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE
NGO SUMATE? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE?

A. WE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW CLOSELY THE CASE OF THE LEADERS OF
SUMATE, WHO LAST YEAR WERE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED BY THE VENEZUELAN
GOVERNMENT OF "TREASON" FOR RECEIVING A SMALL GRANT FROM THE
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY FOR VOTER EDUCATION AND
CIVIC ACTIVITIES. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS

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IN THE CASE AT THIS TIME.

WE REMAIN SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE HARRASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN VENEZUELA AS WELL AS CONTINUED THREATS TO DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND BASIC CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS THERE.

WE EXPECT VENEZUELA, LIKE ALL OTHER DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES IN THE HEMISPHERE TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER THE INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. CA/WHA PRESS GUIDANCE, JANUARY 27, 2005:

-- MEXICO: ISSUANCE OF PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING BORDER DANGERS --

THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT FOR MEXICO ISSUED JANUARY 26, 2005, ALERTS "U.S. CITIZENS THE CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION ALONG THE MEXICAN SIDE OF THE U.S.)MEXICO BORDER IN THE WAKE OF INCREASED VIOLENCE AMONG DRUG TRAFFICKERS."

WHILE THE MAJORITY OF TRAVELERS IN THE BORDER REGION VISIT WITHOUT MISHAP, THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT NOTES THAT "U.S. CITIZENS SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE RISK POSED BY THE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION."

THE CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEET FOR MEXICO HAS LONG STATED "VISITORS TO BORDER CITIES (SHOULD REMAIN ALERT AND BE AWARE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS AT ALL TIMES. VISITORS ARE VERY VULNERABLE WHEN VISITING THE LOCAL 'RED LIGHT DISTRICTS,' PARTICULARLY IF THEY ARE DEPARTING ALONE IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING(. INNOCENT BYSTANDERS ARE AT RISK FROM THE INCREASE IN DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE IN THE STREETS OF BORDER CITIES(IN OTHER INSTANCES IN BORDER CITIES, U.S. CITIZENS HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED AND SCORES IMPRISONED AFTER GETTING INVOLVED IN THE SALE OR PURCHASE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS. U.S. CITIZENS ARE ADVISED TO AVOID ANY INVOLVEMENT WITH CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES OR THOSE WHO DEAL IN THEM(."

Q. HOW MANY AMERICAN CITIZENS HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED ALONG THE BORDER?

AT LEAST 27 AMERICAN CITIZENS HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED ALONG THE BORDER OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS. THIS NUMBER DOES NOT INCLUDE &EXPRESS KIDNAPPINGS," WHERE AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE

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ABDUCTED FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME AND FORCED TO WITHDRAW LARGE SUMS OF CASH FROM ATMS BEFORE BEING RELEASED.

WE HAVE RECENTLY SEEN AN INCREASE IN REPORTS FROM AMERICAN CITIZENS OF "EXPRESS KIDNAPPINGS." THE CURRENT CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEET FOR MEXICO NOTES, "U.S. CITIZENS SHOULD BE VERY CAUTIOUS IN GENERAL WHEN USING ATMS IN MEXICO. IF AN ATM MUST BE USED, IT SHOULD BE ACCESSED ONLY DURING THE BUSINESS DAY AT LARGE PROTECTED FACILITIES (PREFERABLY INSIDE COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS, RATHER THAN AT GLASS-ENCLOSED, HIGHLY VISIBLE ATMS ON STREETS) (. ALL U.S. CITIZEN VICTIMS OF CRIME IN MEXICO ARE ENCOURAGED TO REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE NEAREST POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND TO THE NEAREST U.S. CONSULAR OFFICE (."

Q. HOW MANY AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE CURRENTLY BEING HELD?

OF THE 27, TWO OF THE ABDUCTED AMERICAN CITIZENS WERE KILLED AND ELEVEN REMAIN MISSING. THE OTHER 14 ABDUCTED AMERICANS WERE EVENTUALLY RELEASED BY THEIR CAPTORS.

Q. WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE DOING ABOUT THOSE THAT REMAIN MISSING?

THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO WORK WITH MEXICAN AND U.S. FEDERAL OFFICIALS REGARDING THE WELFARE AND WHEREABOUTS OF THESE AMERICAN CITIZENS. THE DEPARTMENT REMAINS IN CONTACT WITH THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING AMERICANS.

Q. WHAT ARE WE DOING TO SEE THAT THOSE WHO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES AGAINST AMERICANS ARE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE?

THE DEPARTMENT TAKES A STRONG ROLE IN PROMOTING THE WELFARE AND PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IN MEXICO AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THROUGH OUR EMBASSY IN MEXICO CITY AND CONSULATES THROUGHOUT MEXICO, THE UNITED STATES WORKS CLOSELY WITH MEXICAN AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE STEPS ARE TAKEN TO ASSURE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF ALL UNITED STATES CITIZENS IN MEXICO. IN SITUATIONS WHERE AMERICANS ARE VICTIMS OF SERIOUS CRIME, WE MONITOR THESE CASES CLOSELY TO ENSURE THAT MEXICAN OFFICIALS ARREST, PROSECUTE AND CONVICT THOSE RESPONSIBLE.

Q. WHAT ARE WE DOING TO ENSURE THIS VIOLENCE DOESN'T SPILL OVER THE BORDER INTO THE U.S.?

THE VIOLENCE HAS BEEN LINKED TO MEXICAN CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PRINCIPALLY OCCURRED IN MEXICO. THESE ORGANIZATIONS OPERATE EXTENSIVELY IN UNITED STATES TERRITORY AND POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO CITIZENS OF BOTH COUNTRIES. IN

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RESPONSE, UNITED STATES LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, ESPECIALLY ALONG THE BORDER, COOPERATE AND COORDINATE CLOSELY WITH THEIR MEXICAN COUNTERPARTS TO COMBAT INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND RESPOND TO CRIMINAL VIOLENCE ON BOTH SIDES OF OUR COMMON BORDER.

Q. WHAT ARE WE DOING TO ASSIST THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT STRENGTHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT?

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PROVIDES TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MEXICAN LAW ENFORCEMENT. IN 2004, WE SPONSORED OVER 100 TRAINING COURSES ATTENDED BY MORE THAN 4,000 MEXICAN POLICE OFFICERS AND PROSECUTORS. THE TOPICS COVERED BY THESE COURSES INCLUDE: CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS, ANTI-CORRUPTION AND INTEGRITY, SAFETY BORDER TECHNIQUES, FORENSIC INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES, KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE NEGOTIATION.

WE HAVE AGAIN OFFERED TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THE SITUATIONS REFERENCED IN THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT.

Q. WHAT ARE WE DOING TO HELP MEXICO IMPROVE ITS "WEAK, OVERWORKED, AND INEFFICIENT" JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND FIGHT REPORTED CORRUPTION?

THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PARTICULAR PROVIDES CONSIDERABLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE JUDICIAL SECTOR.

OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE STATE DEPARTMENT, PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO STRENGTHEN THE MEXICAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES COURSES FOR MEXICAN POLICE AND PROSECUTORS IN ANTI-CORRUPTION AND INTEGRITY AND CRIMINAL AND NARCOTICS INVESTIGATION.

FOR ITS PART, THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO HAS SOUGHT TO IMPROVE ITS LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPACITIES. PRESIDENT FOX HAS SPEARHEADED REFORMS SUCH AS THE DRAFTING OF A NEW CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE FIVE NATIONAL POLICE AGENCIES.

Q. HOW OFTEN IN THE PAST HAVE YOU ISSUED A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT FOR MEXICO?

SINCE 1999, THERE HAVE BEEN 6 PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS ISSUED FOR MEXICO (INCLUDING THE ONE ISSUED JANUARY 26, 2004).

THE REASON FOR THE ISSUANCE OF THE PREVIOUS PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR MEXICO HAVE VARIED GREATLY) FOR EXAMPLE,

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THERE HAS BEEN UNREST IN CHIAPAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN CANCUN, THE THREAT OF A HURRICANE AND VOLCANIC ACTIVITY, AND CHANGES IN IMPORTATION OF FOREIGN VEHICLES INTO MEXICO.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE ISSUED WHEN THE DEPARTMENT WISHES TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION QUICKLY ABOUT THREATS AND OTHER RELATIVELY SHORT-TERM CONDITIONS THAT POSE SIGNIFICANT RISKS OR DISRUPTIONS TO AMERICAN CITIZENS ABROAD.

4. PM PRESS GUIDANCE, JANUARY 27, 2005:

-- ARREST OF NICARAGUANS IN MANPADS MISSILE STING --

THE UNITED STATES WAS ENCOURAGED BY NICARAGUAN PRESIDENT ENRIQUE BOLANOS' ASSURANCES TO PRESIDENT BUSH AND FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE POWELL IN 2003 THAT NICARAGUA WOULD DESTROY ALL OF ITS MAN-PORTABLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS (MANPADS, AKA SHOULDER-FIRED ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES) IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE CHANCE THAT THEY MIGHT FALL INTO THE HANDS OF CRIMINALS AND TERRORISTS.

THE UNITED STATES COMMENDS THE NICARAGUAN AUTHORITIES FOR SUCCESSFULLY RECOVERING ONE OF THEIR MANPADS (A RUSSIAN-MADE SA-7) DURING A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION IN WHICH USG AUTHORITIES COOPERATED. I CANNOT COMMENT FURTHER ON THIS INVESTIGATION.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,S OFFICE OF WEAPONS AND REMOVAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, COOPERATION IN DESTROYING THEIR EXCESS MANPADS, OR BETTER SECURING THEM AGAINST THEFT OR ILLEGAL SALES OR TRANSFERS TO OTHER PARTIES. WE HAVE ALREADY ASSISTED NICARAGUA IN DESTROYING SOME OF ITS MANPADS.

THE UNITED STATES EXPECTS NICARAGUA TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON ITS COMMITMENT TO DESTROY ITS REMAINING MANPADS AND WILL CONTINUE TO ASSIST NICARAGUA IN THIS REGARD.

IF ASKED: WE WILL NOT CONFIRM NOR COMMENT ON ALLEGED NUMBERS OF STOCKPILED OR DESTROYED NICARAGUAN MANPADS THAT HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN THE MEDIA.

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